

## At-A-Glance: Recent Research Findings

### Gang Prevention Program Evaluated

*NIJ Research in Progress Seminar, "The National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program," Finn-Aage Esbensen, grant number 94-IJ-CX-0058, available on videotape from NCJRS (NCJ 185668).*

In a longitudinal evaluation of a gang prevention program, researchers found something surprising: no significant differences between participants and nonparticipants after 2 years, but important differences in attitudes after 4 years. Program participants also reported lower levels of gang membership, self-reported delinquency, and victimization, although these differences were not statistically significant.

The evaluation involved the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program curriculum,

which was developed in 1991 and is now taught in all 50 States and overseas. More than 1.5 million students have gone through the program. The evaluation involved 6 sites and 3,000 students and was supported by NIJ in cooperation with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.

Trained uniformed officers lead G.R.E.A.T. students through a curriculum based on a cognitive approach that is designed to produce attitudinal and behavioral changes. Students are taught how to set positive goals, resist negative pressures, resolve conflicts, and understand how gangs impact the quality of their lives.

### Possible Explanation for the Unusual Findings

The researchers suggested two inter-related possibilities for the apparent 4-year lagged effect: (1) young adolescents are often ambiguous about exhibiting socially accepted attitudes

and behaviors, and (2) the Nation's schools are structured in such a way that children move from smaller, more nurturing elementary schools to progressively larger and more diversified middle and high schools. As young people move into a wider world, they also struggle to attain greater maturity and understanding about themselves. As a result, the authors speculated that too many factors may have obfuscated the 2-year situation to adequately discern the effects of the prevention experience. Early experiences with the program may not be manifested until the youths are older.

### Evaluation Results Spur Program Enhancements

When the 2-year findings were released, G.R.E.A.T.'s national policy board<sup>1</sup> asked a group of experts to review and assess the curriculum. The board's willingness to subject the program to a critical review demonstrated the high level of commitment to the mission. The review led to a more skill-based and interactive curriculum that is being piloted in spring 2001.

For more information, contact Finn-Aage Esbensen, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 402-472-6383, esbensen@unlserve.unl.edu.

Also see Finn-Aage Esbensen and Wayne Osgood, 1997. *Research in Brief. National Evaluation of*

## How to Get At-A-Glance Materials

Materials are available at:

- NIJ's Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>, or
- NCJRS, puborder@ncjrs.org, 1-800-851-3420, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000.

The summaries in this section are based on the following:

**Research in Progress Seminars.** At these seminars, scholars discuss their ongoing research and preliminary findings with an audience of researchers and criminal justice professionals. Sixty-minute VHS videotapes of the Research in Progress seminars are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at 1-800-851-3420. Videotaped seminars are \$19 (\$24 in Canada and other countries).

**NIJ Final Reports.** These final submissions from NIJ grantees typically are available from NCJRS through interlibrary loan. In some cases, photocopies may be obtained for a fee. For information about these reports and possible fees, contact NCJRS.

**NIJ Publications.** Some of the information here is summarized from recent NIJ publications, which are available from the NIJ Web site or by contacting NCJRS. Refer to the documents' accession (ACN) or NCJ numbers.

1. Members of the G.R.E.A.T. board, which shares responsibility for and oversight of the programs, are the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center; and representatives from five local-level law enforcement agencies (Phoenix, Arizona; Portland, Oregon; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; La Crosse, Wisconsin; and Orange County, Florida).

G.R.E.A.T., Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. NCJ 167264, which discusses the methodology of the cross-sectional portion of the G.R.E.A.T. evaluation in more detail. It also discusses findings from the process evaluation, which were found overall to be favorable. Detailed findings from the longitudinal portion of the study are in *Responding to Gangs: Evaluation and Research*, forthcoming in fall 2001 from NIJ.

## How Battered Women Cope

*NIJ Research in Progress Seminar, "An Ecological Model of Battered Women's Experience Over Time," Mary Ann Dutton, grant number 98-WT-VX-0023, available on videotape from NCJRS (NCJ 186728).*

Almost half of the women in a study on domestic violence said that the abusive episode that triggered their current involvement in the courts or shelter was severe. This finding emphasizes the importance of placing individual episodes of violence in the context and history of the relationship.

The ongoing study of battered women's experiences over time has a sample of 406 women who came into contact with researchers at three sites—a battered women's shelter, a specialized domestic violence criminal court, and a civil protection order court. The study was designed to uncover patterns over time, understand how women assess risks, and learn more about the strategies women use for dealing with violence and abuse.

Although the sample was predominantly African American, it represents a diverse range of women in terms of age, income, relationship status, living arrangement, and number of children.

Table 1: Helpfulness of Commonly Used Domestic Violence Prevention Strategies

Strategy	Percentage of Women Who Used the Strategy	Percentage of Women Who Rated the Strategy "Helpful"
Talked to abuser	90%	24%
Ended the relationship	87	43
Called police	85	58
Refused to comply with abuser	86	41
Fought back	81	34
Slept separately	80	39
Left home	79	51
Filed for protection order	72	53
Kept things quiet in household	70	40
Tried not to cry	69	36
Talked to family and friends	69	58

In the first of several waves of interviews, participants reported a wide range of strategies for dealing with violence. The most common strategy—talking with the abuser—was also the least helpful in terms of reducing the violence and abuse. Just over half of the women found that calling the police, another common strategy, was helpful. Table 1 lists the strategies and shows the percentages of women who used each strategy and found them helpful.

Most women who obtained protection orders rated them useful in reducing the violence and abuse, but most women continued to have contact with their abuser, probably because custody of children was involved.

Women reported significantly less overall violence and abuse between the time they entered the study and 3 months later. However, the abuse—especially stalking—continued for a significant number of women. Additional follow-up data will be analyzed to evaluate the reduction in violence and abuse over time.

Mary Ann Dutton presented preliminary findings at a Research in Progress Seminar held at NIJ. She collaborated on the study with Lisa A. Goodman of Boston College; Dorothy Lessing, Esq., of the House of Ruth; and Jane C. Murphy, Esq., of the University of Baltimore Law School.

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## Police Dissatisfaction With Defense and Control Tactics

*Journal article "An Analysis of Police Officer Satisfaction With Defense and Control Tactics," Robert J. Kaminski and Jeffrey A. Martin, Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management 23(2) (2000): 132-53.*

Unknowingly, some police agencies may adopt unarmed defense and control tactics that are of questionable utility for safely and efficiently subduing resistive and combative

suspects. This occurs in part because policing in the United States is highly diverse and decentralized, and although this can lead to innovations, it can also lead to communication problems and duplication of efforts—especially in the area of defense and control. In addition, no national standards are in place regarding the amount of training officers should receive, the methods of instruction, or the techniques proven most successful.

Robert J. Kaminski and Jeffrey A. Martin have recently published findings from their analysis of survey responses from approximately 600 officers to learn:

- What they think about the training they received.
- Officers' experiences in using the tactics during street encounters.
- Officers' interest in alternative techniques and training methods.

### Lessons Learned and Suggested Improvements

Approximately 60 percent of the officers in the survey said the defense and control tactics training they had received from their departments was "not at all" or "only a little" effective on resistive subjects. Yet only about a fourth of the officers wanted to spend more time learning defense and control tactics from their department.

Such high levels of dissatisfaction suggest that in-service training methods need to be reexamined and redeveloped, at least in those agencies experiencing similar levels of dissatisfaction among their officers.

The survey responses provide some hints for improving in-service training. Officers expressed:

- High levels of interest in in-service training in wrestling,

### Police Dissatisfaction Survey Methods

The survey took place over a 2-week period in June 1998. It included 65 questions designed to collect information about officer characteristics (age, sex, fitness levels, length of service, and victimization experience), types of defense and control tactics training received, opinions about the effectiveness of various defense and control methods, whether more or less training should be provided, and level of interest in alternative defense and control methods.

takedowns, punching, kicking, defense against multiple assailants, defense against pepper spray, and gun retention techniques.

- Moderate levels of interest in pressure point controls, baton controls, and firearms training.
- Relatively little interest in verbal tactics, locks and holds, training with pepper spray, and baton strikes.

Interestingly, more than half of the respondents indicated they had studied wrestling, boxing, or martial arts outside of the department, and virtually all reported that these methods were helpful during arrest or self-defense situations. These officers' responses may be overly optimistic because they self-selected their training. However, it cannot be overlooked that the officers' responses may indicate a need for agencies to increase in-service training time in areas of high interest to officers as a way to improve technique effectiveness.

### Implications for Policy

The survey indicates that police administrators may lack objective information as to whether or not their officers are being taught the most efficient physical methods for safely subduing resistive and combative suspects. If certain techniques or training methods are not effective, officers, suspects, and innocent bystanders may be at risk for unnecessary injury.

Continual and substantial improvements have no doubt been made in instructional methods and in the selection of defense and control tactics over the last several decades. Nevertheless, well-designed research and evaluation efforts can help determine which tactics and training methods will produce the desired results in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

Future research can address such questions as: How much initial training should be provided to recruits? How frequently should in-service training occur? What level of technique complexity is optimal? Which specific techniques work best for defense and control?

For more information, contact Robert J. Kaminski, Social Science Analyst, NIJ, 202-616-9135, [kaminski@ojp.usdoj.gov](mailto:kaminski@ojp.usdoj.gov).

### Using Sales Taxes to Combat Drug Use

*Final report submitted to NIJ, Jackson County, Missouri, COMMunity Backed Anti-Drug Tax (COMBAT) Evaluation, by Peter Finn, et al., grant number 96-IJ-CX-0091. Available from NCJRS (NCJ 182439).*

Twice, the voters of Jackson County, Missouri (Kansas City), have voted to increase their county sales tax by one-quarter of 1 percent to fund prevention, treatment, and law enforcement initiatives to fight substance abuse.

Voters approved the funding effort, called COMMunity Backed Anti-Drug Tax (COMBAT), in 1989 for 7 years and again in 1995 for another 7 years.

The tax has generated between \$14 to \$18 million each year. Both the unique funding mechanism and the ambitious goals of the COMBAT effort have received considerable attention outside of Jackson County.

## Has It Worked?

The program underwent only limited evaluation early in its history. In 1996, NIJ and the Kauffman Foundation joined forces to solicit a full evaluation. Abt Associates won that procurement and began work in the fall of 1996. The highlights of the findings include the following:

**Did COMBAT lead to increased jailing of dangerous offenders?** Taken as a whole, the number of arrests of serious drug offenders has increased substantially. The arrest rate has been comparable to or higher than the rate found in other jurisdictions—a rate that has been sustained over the entire COMBAT period. In Missouri, Jackson County has made large contributions to the State prison population, as well as contributing to keeping the county jail operating at over-capacity levels.

**Did COMBAT increase the treatment of nonviolent offenders who want to get off drugs?** COMBAT appears to have increased the amount of treatment available. Program funding made treatment available for an estimated 4,500 individuals in 1997. Data limitations prevented estimating the increased treatment slots for other years.

**Did COMBAT increase the prevention of drug experimentation among youth?** COMBAT increased the number of prevention initiatives in Jackson County, and the study

estimated that these prevention initiatives reached several thousand young people. However, the evaluation could not determine whether COMBAT reduced drug experimentation or how many individuals COMBAT-funded prevention initiatives served over the life of the program. Trends in school-based surveys of drug use among 12th graders suggest no significant changes during COMBAT years. Local trends in drug use are similar to those found nationwide.

**Did COMBAT support innovative programming that might not otherwise have been funded?** COMBAT initiated, coordinated, or funded a number of significant innovative initiatives. Perhaps the most innovative aspect of COMBAT is the scope of its programming. Among the significant initiatives were a multimillion dollar Grant Match Program that attracts an estimated \$4 for each \$1 in COMBAT matching funds, Community Action Networks (CAN's) that link neighborhood organizations and police officers to solve local crime problems, job preparation and placement services for substance abusers in treatment through the Full Employment Council, and landlord-related initiatives for dealing with substance-abusing and drug-trafficking tenants.

**Did COMBAT enhance communication and collaborative action among organizations, programs, and jurisdictions?** COMBAT promoted considerable collaboration among a wide range of organizations, programs, and jurisdictions. The program's overall philosophy and approach is one of collaboration among prevention providers, the treatment community, and the criminal justice system.

**Did COMBAT promote economic development activities?** The study could not estimate the exact

number of jobs COMBAT may have helped generate. However, it appears that a very modest increase in job opportunities occurred because of COMBAT's contribution to making the community safer and less disorderly than in the past.

## Is there community support for COMBAT and its program?

Every 7 years, the voters of Jackson County must reapprove the anti-drug tax. Generating community support is essential if COMBAT is to survive. Although most COMBAT participants and observers believe that most residents are not familiar with the program, a random digit-dialing survey of Missouri telephone exchanges in 1998 found that 45 percent of Jackson County residents were aware of COMBAT and, of those, 64 percent were satisfied with COMBAT's performance.

## Policy Implications

While in its infancy COMBAT looked similar to other community partnership efforts or localized law enforcement efforts, it has evolved and started to become institutionalized as a large-scale, comprehensive public health approach to dealing with drug abuse and all of the problems that arise from drug abuse. The level of integration of both public health and strong law enforcement components is unusual.

COMBAT is also unique in that it represents both a stable presence in the community through funding a standing group of providers and programs over the years, as well as a dynamic component that supports new programming ideas as they arise.

Jurisdictions that are contemplating replication of COMBAT should consider incorporating three key operational themes:

- A holistic approach to combating substance abuse.

- Evolution, not revolution, in promoting change.
- Accountability among participating agencies and organizations.

Other jurisdictions can replicate COMBAT, and, indeed, Little Rock, Arkansas, already has. Other jurisdictions are most likely to be successful in replicating COMBAT if they:

- Secure strong, top-level political leadership for the program.
- Make law enforcement a major component of the program.
- Give the program a public health focus.
- Find an exceptionally talented, experienced, and dedicated program administrator.

- Make sure there is a strong foundation of accessible treatment programs.
- Earmark the tax money exclusively for fighting substance abuse.
- Plan in advance how the money will be used.
- Assign staff full-time to monitor prevention and treatment provider performance.
- Find ways to make participants feel they “own” the initiatives.

Finally, other communities should allocate funds for evaluating the program and begin the evaluation from the start. COMBAT itself did not commission or arrange for a comprehensive evaluation when it first began. The lack of written pro-

gram objectives and activities and the lack of complete, reliable, and pertinent data limited the value of most of the subsequent evaluations that were conducted. Only by beginning the evaluation when the program starts is it possible to collect the kinds of valid baseline and historical data that may not be accessible easily or at all later on.

Additionally, if COMBAT had set up an evaluation at the start, all parties that were to receive COMBAT funding would have been put on notice from the outset that they would be held accountable for achieving their goals.

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